Brave New World - full post

Posted on 22 September 2011

The world of statistics is entering a new era. Whereas in times past we statisticians only concentrated on economic measures, or looked at social measures separately from economic measures, now a new broader perspective is being embraced by statisticians worldwide. Other areas of life, such as the environment are being taking into account when measuring progress, and all these areas are being looked at together instead of separately. This is a big shift and it may have ramifications for the future, because statistics affect how we understand our society and these statistics are changing.

This shift is being led by projects like MAP from the ABS in Australia and 'How's Life?' by the OECD internationally. And this shift requires us to think about the future, and more specifically the future of statistics. Now is your chance to think about what areas of life we need to understand as we move forward into this new era of statistics.

For us to be able to keep up with changes in our society so that these changes are reflected in our statistics, we need to know what will matter in the coming decades. What should we be measuring that goes beyond traditional economic measures and sets us up for the future?

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Key areas that often appear overlooked, neglected or ignored are about our provision of care. Particularly how we care for our Young, Elderly and animals - the measure of this is a great indicator as to how we are progressing as a society. The risk of course is that we may well demonstrate quite clearly that we are not progressing.

Other areas where statistical analysis would benefit do relate to economic measures, but, I would suggest coming at it from a different angle. The increase in privatisation of public sector services and how this has impacted on broader community, impacts on skills training, service delivery and changes to costs for services previously provided by Governemnt. Another Key area here would be the statistical information relating to Government revenue, i.e. the sale of public assets gives a one off economic boost, however, how is this measured longitudinally for ongoing government revenue.

Statistics relating to local manufacture, mining and production vs foreign owned business operating in Australia and the impact on our economy would also be quite informative.

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